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ABSTRACT

Using interviews, observation, and archival documents, researchers traced the 4-year history of a "freestanding" interorganizational arrangement for school improvement in Santa Clara County (California). Called the "AB 65 Elementary Consortium," the interdistrict collaboration was started in response to California Assembly Bill (AB) 65, which mandates tests of elementary students' basic skills proficiencies. The proficiency testing consortium was "freestanding" in that member organizations contributed all the resources required. Established in 1977, the consortium began developing guidelines for proficiency tests, had a setback in early 1979 when its first tests (prepared by consultants) proved to be of poor quality, but retrenched and succeeded in publishing its own testing products in 1980-81. The tests chiefly measured math, reading, and writing competencies in grades 4, 6, and 8. Consortium membership grew from 12 districts and agencies in 1978 to 33 in 1980 and fell back to 25 in mid-1981. Important in the consortium's development were its sources and uses of services and information, the role of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, and the districts' local control over their own participation. An appendix provides data on the consortium and documents relating to its formation and products. (RW)

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SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: A CASE STUDY

Sue McKibbin

November, 1981

EA 014 746

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FOREWORD

This case study represents a portion of a larger effort, supported by the Research and Educational Practice Unit of the National Institute of Education, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how various types of educational organizations relate to one another in accomplishing school improvement projects. In a previous study* we identified, described, and analyzed the characteristics of 103 interorganizational arrangements (IOAs) involving educational agencies that were found in the 13 counties of the Greater San Francisco Bay Area. Several unexpected findings emerged from this study. First was the large number of arrangements identified. Second was the frequency with which educational organizations participated in arrangements: the range of frequency was between one and 18 arrangements; 67 percent of the 409 educational agencies identified participated in two or more arrangements. Third, all of the 231 Bay Area school districts were engaged in at least one arrangement, and 90 percent were in two or more. These findings indicate much more frequent formal connection among educational organizations than has been previously assumed or identified.

A two-dimensional, nine-cell classification system was developed to classify the arrangements. One dimension considered the legal status of the arrangement itself (mandated, enabled, or freestanding) and the second dimension considered the legal status of the improvement effort that the arrangement supported (mandated, enabled, or freestanding). When the 103 arrangements were classified by this two-dimensional system, no arrangements were found for two of the nine subclasses: a) mandated arrangement supporting a freestanding school improvement effort and b) enabled arrangement supporting a freestanding improvement effort., Only 14 percent of the arrangements were freestanding arrnagements supporting freestanding improvement efforts. The remaining 86 percent of the arrangements were focused on supporting mandated or enabled improvement efforts, and over three-fourths of the 103 arrangements belonged to one of the four classes in which there was joint external influence, mandated or enabled, on both the arrangement itself and the school improvement effort the arrangement supported.

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* C.S. Cates, P.D. Hood, and S. McKibbin, An Exploration of Interorganizational Arrangements that Support School Improvement. San Francisco, CA: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, 1981.

However, 10 of the 103 arrangements had the interesting characteristic of being freestanding arrangements (in which member organizations contributed all of the resources of the arrangement and for which there was no significant external requirement provided) that were voluntarily formed by educational agencies to support school improvement efforts that were themselves mandated (four IOAs) or enabled (six IOAs). All four of the freestanding arrangements supporting mandated improvement efforts were Proficiency Testing Consortia.

This case study describes one of these Proficiency Testing Consortia. We have made a special effort to describe this particular arrangement not only to provide more detailed information about this type of IOA, but also because this type of arrangement provides a highly promising model for successful collaboration among school districts that are confronted with requirements that may severely tax their individual resources. The case study also demonstrates the importance of effective organizational leadership (in this case provided by a county school's office) and significant participation and "ownership" on the part of member organizations.

This case study documents the major events that occurred within this interorganizational arrangement, where the members went for services and information, and how this knowledge was used. The costs and benefits, responsibilties and rewards of consortium activity emerge as the case unfolds over a four-year time frame.

Paul D. Hood
Educational Dissemination Studies Program

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Data collection for this case study was strengthened by the willingness of staff at the Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools to share their knowledge and expertise concerning the AB 65 Elementary Consortium. John Patterson, Consortium Coordinator, opened his files to us, kept us up-to-date with regular mailings of announcements and reports, talked with us at length about consortium development, and reviewed an early draft of the case study. Dale Burklund and Harley Roth, who work with other consortia at the county office, also contributed their time and information.

My colleague Carolyn Cates helped with all of the data collection and critiqued drafts of the study. Paul Hood provided suggestions for the appendix. Ward Mason of the National Institute of Education offered insightful suggestions that were incorporated into the report. Mark Malkas edited the material. Judith Haglund and Paul Halley typed the preliminary and final drafts of the case.

Sue McKibbin
Educational Dissemination Studies Program

THE CASE STUDY

Introduction

Interorganizational arrangements (IOAs), like the organizations that comprise them, change dramatically over time. After they are established, they experiment, grow, and stabilize. Then they decline and disappear or are altered in some form. Interactions among member organizations change as do their contributions. Information resources and knowledge inputs vary to reflect the redefined needs and purposes of the IOA. There can be starts and stops, detours, dead ends, conflicts, disappointments, and dropouts. These in turn can be offset by reduced costs, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards for the representatives, well-developed products or services, and strong, healthy relationships among member organizations.

This case study of the AB 65 Elementary Consortium established in Santa Clara County, California will trace the history, products and processes of the consortium from the time it was no more than an idea in a 1977 memorandum. Since then, it has sponsored the development of competencies, performance indicators, and item banks in reading, writing, and mathematics for grades 4, 6, and 8. Its products also include guidelines for scoring writing samples and an administrator's notebook for meeting the requirements of AB 65. The consortium has sought help from staff at the Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools and other county offices, the California State Department of Education (CSDE), private educational testing and consulting firms, member districts, and other sources. The impressive list of valuable products is proof positive that collaboration can be

cost-effective and oriented toward results. The esprit de corps and active involvement of the consortium members underscore the other less tangible benefits of working together.

Santa Clara County

Santa Clara County begins at the southern end of the San Francisco Bay peninsula and extends inland through metropolitan and rural areas. Varied socioeconomic and cultural conditions exist, exemplified by the "Silicon Valley" electronics and computer manufacturers dotting the northern part of the county and the farms growing produce in the rich soil to the south. Small suburban communities have developed around San Jose, the largest city in the county. San Jose has a substantial Hispanic population and other less dominant minorities. The Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools serves 22 elementary districts, five high school districts, and six unified districts.

The Legislative Mandate

California State Assembly Bill 65 (AB 65) mandated that each elementary school district should assess the current basic skills achievement of its students to determine if they have reached the level of competency expected by the district. Elementary boards of education were required by law to adopt a set of competencies in reading comprehension, writing, and computation for grades 4-6 and 7-8 by June 1, 1979. The local board was also required to establish proficiency standards with the involvement of parents, administrators, teachers, and counselors. The legislation emphasized the assessment of each pupil's mastery of the basic skills rather than the pupil's performance relative to his or her classmates.

A companion bill, AB 3408, required that after June 1980, high school students unable to meet locally prescribed standards in the three basic skills be refused a diploma. The law established an "early warning system" that requires competency testing beginning once in grades 7-9 and conducted twice in grades 10 and 11. A conference between the school principal or a designee, the student, a parent or guardian, and a teacher must be held if the student fails to meet the prescribed standards. After the conference, instruction in basic skills must be provided until the student has been given repeated opportunity to achieve the standards.

Both California laws allow individual districts to establish their own proficiency assessment standards. Districts may also decide which specific competencies will be tested and how this will be done. Some districts have decided to use standardized tests; others have chosen to develop their own measurement instruments. Some have met the requirement on their own; others have joined a cooperative effort aimed at meeting the legal requirements as completely and efficiently as possible.

Early Discussions of the Consortium

Twenty-two people from Santa Clara County school districts and the county office attended a meeting on October 19, 1977 "to determine [the] value, need, [and] feasibility of forming a consortium of districts to implement the instructional implications of AB 65." Elementary school districts and their boards of education were required to adopt a set of competencies for grades 4-6 and 7-8 by June 1, 1979. The impetus for the meeting came initially from the Assistant Superintendents of Instruction of the elementary school districts, who meet

regularly at the county office. Already a consortium of county districts serving the secondary level had been established to formulate the materials and procedures necessary to place basic skills proficiency assessments in member districts by the June 1980 deadline. Maybe something similar would be beneficial for elementary districts as well.

At the meeting, warnings were aired by those skeptical about the ability of a consortium to meet individual district needs. Discussion emphasized the fact that minimum standards would vary from district to district; it might also be more difficult to articulate elementary standards with those at the high school level if a consortium were involved. But by the end of the meeting, there was general agreement that a cooperative effort would be desirable. The county office was asked to clarify in writing what it was proposing to the districts. A task force of five volunteers was formed to develop recommendations for working together as a consortium.

The following week, the task force met with three staff members from the county office to discuss issues related to the establishment of a consortium. Some of their concerns were based on the fact that a few districts had already established basic skills competency continua and had articulated their programs with the high schools. They did not want to be put in a position of revising or renegotiating what was already in place.

One task force member presented a plan supporting the idea of a proficiency assessment consortium. He argued that the joint contributions of member districts would result in a pool of objectives and items as well as computer services that none of the districts alone

could afford. He also suggested that the members would be more able to introduce alternative instructional approaches using the products developed by a consortium.

By the end of the meeting, the county office had agreed to conduct an orientation to the AB 65 legislation for elementary districts in the county. The county office would also calculate a cost estimate for the development of basic skills objectives and item pools. The task force had assigned itself seven activities related to the development of competencies, objectives, scoring processes, reporting procedures, and instructional models. Based on the work of the task force, needed workshops and consultant help would be identified.

Here we see, then, that by October 1977 there was enough interest on the part of some local and county education agency staff to clarify the services that a consortium could support and what it would cost. School districts were facing a given--a legislatively mandated basic skills proficiency assessment for grades 4-6 and 7-8. Compliance with the directive was not optional, although how districts went about doing so was. Two assumptions informed some of the early thinking about the consortium:

1. The functions, purposes, and costs of the collaborative effort should be specified, and
2. Information and resources from outside the consortium would be necessary to complete the tasks.

Establishment of the Consortium

January 1978 marked the next round of organizational meetings of the "Elementary AB 65 County Group." All elementary districts were invited to send representatives to a meeting to discuss the

budget draft prepared by the County Director of Guidance and Vocational Education, who was spearheading the effort. The possibility of consolidating the elementary and high school consortia was also discussed. Supporting the consolidation, some argued that it would enhance information sharing, cut costs, increase staff development activity, and serve the "political" function of answering critics more effectively. On the negative side, others suggested that the size would prove too cumbersome for effective communication, that there would be less motivation to cooperate, that money would not be saved, and that articulation was already occurring locally anyway. Eventually a decision was made to "set up both consortia and get together periodically."

Three county office staff members (the Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Services, the Director of General Education Services, and the Director of Guidance and Vocational Education) met during February and March 1978 to discuss the role of their agency in the consortium effort. Four thousand dollars would be provided by the county office to pay a consultant to work on basic skills comptetency statements and performance indicators. Staffing assistance would also be available from the county office. District representatives would be trained to use the "Alameda process" at the local level. (Devised by the Alameda [California] County Office of Education, this group process would enable individual districts to generate competency statements and performance standards appropriate to their educational programs.)

The thinking at the time ran so: After all this had been accomplished, teachers would write the necessary test items and develop the test instruments. The county office would sponsor a series of workshops to train teachers from member districts in test preparation.

It was also proposed that the consortium could work with the California State Department of Education to field test the teacher-developed items during fall 1978.

On April 10, 1978, a meeting of elementary district representatives was held at which the county office formally proposed the establishment of an Elementary AB 65 Consortium. The consortium activities previously discussed by county office staff were proposed to the group, along with the estimate that assessment packages could be developed by July 1, 1978 at a cost of $45,000. This would demand district fiscal contributions.

Speaking at a later meeting of district Assistant Superintendents for Instruction, the County Assistant Superintendent stated that "the finished product will address mandates of state legislation in a way that assures local [and] county ownership, validity and reliability...and [also assures that school districts] can adapt their instructional programs' diagnostic procedures to the competencies in ways they best see fit." During April, the consortium was formally established, and by June, sixteen school districts and two universities were participating with the county office in the consortium.

Initiating the Work

In April, the county office hired a consultant to the consortium to provide specific resources and services as rapidly as possible. Reading, writing, and math meetings were scheduled in May for discussion of the possible constraints and benefits of minimum competency assessment in each area. Competency statements for the three basic skills

were also written at the meetings. A June memorandum from the consultant to consortium members suggested a new timeline for the development of an assessment package by September 1979.

Not much was accomplished during the summer of 1978. In fact, a memorandum to consortium members announcing the upcoming September meeting began, "This is a follow-up of our letter of June 7, 1978 to remind you that the AB 65 Elementary Consortium is still in existence." The same memorandum proposed two methods of accomplishing the necessary consortium tasks during the upcoming school year. The first was to obtain money from districts and the county office "to hire a consultant group to develop performance indicators and select items." The second alternative was "to have each of the districts and the county office identify at least one person who could devote 10 full working days" to the tasks at hand.

Formalizing Consortium Membership and Laying Groundwork

Twenty people attended the September meeting. The first agenda item was discussion about whether or not the consortium should continue. Up to this point, the districts had not contributed any financial resources to the support of the consortium. The county office had done what it could by hiring a consultant to work from April to June on some consortium tasks. But the entire process was moving much too slowly. It was evident that a considerable amount of human or financial resources would be needed if the group was going to meet the legislative mandate by the deadline.

Did the members agree to continue the consortium? They did, despite "confusion about the purpose of the consortium and how it

would insure district/community involvement." The group felt that "only by consortium activity could the law's deadlines be met." Those present requested that a letter be sent from the county office to member districts explaining the products to be developed, the process that would be followed, the minimum number of districts necessary, the timeline, and the reason for the decision to work at the sixth-grade level first.

The letter was sent on October 2, 1978 to all elementary district administrators. Attached was a Consortium Work Agreement Form, establishing each district's contribution to the consortium at $500. By November, 11 work agreements had been signed and returned. In order to help meet the goal of 20 members, the group agreed to allow districts outside Santa Clara County to join the consortium. They stated, "The hope is that we will have 20 [members] so that district contributions ($500 each) will total $10,000 to equal the contribution from the county office."

The understanding that it would be necessary to hire a group of outside consultants to develop and field test the sixth-grade assessment package was implicit in the discussions at the November meeting. The County Director of Vocational Education and Guidance, who had been coordinating most of the consortium effort from the outset, developed a Request for Proposal and mailed it to potential contractors. Two committees were formed to screen the proposals and interview the candidates.

By the December meeting, only one bidder had responded to the RFP, and there were some questions about the adequacy of the bid. The County Vocational Education Director agreed to negotiate with the bidder to assure that the necessary work would be accomplished.

Retrospective on the First Year

A review of the developmental effort that began in October 1977 and continued through December 1978 is in order at this point. Tentative beginnings punctuated the initiation of the consortium. Districts did not yet seem to feel any urgency to work toward meeting the AB 65 mandate. If it were not for the unflagging interest and staunch belief of the County Office in the benefits of consortium activity, it is doubtful that a collaborative effort would have been organized by the districts themselves. Although at this stage the elementary districts did not seem opposed to the consortium, they were not particularly enthusiastic about it, either. Their attitude seemed to be, "If the county office thinks it's such a good idea, we may as well go along with it. The investment of resources is minimal compared to the potential benefits of meeting the legislative mandate as expediently as possible."

It is evident here, then, that the county office's leadership role was becoming increasingly important to the creation of the consortium. Staff at the county office had coordinated consortium activity from the beginning, calling meetings, mailing written communications to elementary districts, and documenting what was occurring. The agency had paid for a consultant to serve the consortium during 1978. The districts in the consortium were looking to county office staff for the guidance and impetus needed to keep the group together.

What information-gathering and knowledge use activities occurred during these early months of the consortium's existence? The county office received information about the legislation from the State Department of Education, as did the school districts. They all seemed

to be aware that although expertise within a district or consortium might be sufficient to put a local proficiency assessment in place, it would probably be necessary to go outside for some services such as scoring.

The consortium enabled outside consultants to be used more readily than they would have been used by individual districts. First, the financial resources contributed by the consortium members and the county office were greater than most districts would have had available. And second, a more thorough process of developing competencies, performance indicators and items and of writing, field testing, and analyzing assessment instruments would be possible. It seemed to be a simple matter of deciding what needed to be done and hiring outside consultants to do the work. As the end of 1978 approached, the consortium was ready to contract with a consulting firm to develop and pilot test sixth-grade assessment items.

Other sources of information and assistance were the Alameda County Office of Education, which provided the training materials and activities for the "Alameda process," and the secondary consortium in Santa Clara County. Little attempt was made by consortium members to do extensive research in basic skills content areas or testing and measurement.

A Period of Faltering

January 1979 began the serious work of the consortium. It had a budget of over $15,000 and a consulting firm to prepare the sixth-grade assessment instrument and pilot test it within a tight timeline. The target dates proved to be too tight, in fact. The only serious problem in the history of the consortium was about to present itself.

Originally, the consulting firm hired to develop and pilot test the sixth-grade items had scheduled field testing for the fourth week in February. Each district was to have some degree of involvement in the pilot testing. A Test Administration Training Session for district representatives was scheduled for February 21, after which those individuals had less than a week to train the teachers who would be giving the tests in their classes. In January it was not yet apparent what problems were about to unfold.

In fact, the February 1979 consortium meeting was only peripherally concerned with the upcoming pilot testing. The group was busy collecting samples of board policies and reciprocity agreements responding to the AB 65 legislation. They discussed assessment procedures other than written tests and began thinking about alternative instructional approaches keyed to basic skills competencies. The Bay Area Writing Committee would be approached to see if it could provide volunteers to train teachers to score the writing samples obtained in the pilot test. Each district was asked to name someone to serve on the writing scoring committee.

The pilot testing was completed. Rumblings about the quality of the work done by the consultant group had not yet begun. The March meeting was devoted to concerns about refining competencies and performance indicators and disseminating sample board policy statements to member districts. The consultant responsible for the pilot testing distributed printouts of the math data and reviewed it with the consortium. There is no indication in the records of the March meeting that problems with the pilot testing were mentioned or discussed.

The April meeting, however, was another matter. A new county office Coordinator for Guidance and Testing assigned to work with the consortium coordinator had collated comments made by the teachers who had scored the writing competency test. They were devastating:

> "One of the worst 'standardized' tests I've run into."
>
> "The scoring is invalid because it is obvious that the tests were administered under widely varying conditions."
>
> "Directions for students on individual items were not complete enough and grammatically incorrect!!"
>
> "Part II was a waste of time. Part III was a total loss."

Comments from teachers were extensive and highly critical. There seemed to be very little positive that could be said for the writing test.

Minutes from the April meeting provide a candid record of the discussion.

> The group felt that the test had been thrown together in a hurry....There was some doubt about the test specification criteria and test performance criteria that were used in selecting the items. The feeling was that it would be hard to give the reasons why certain items appeared in the test. Various members of the consortium said that they got angry calls from teachers about the level of the items and the expectations. The callers did not feel the tests were appropriate as functional competency tests. Part of the problems in getting materials on time and part of the foul-ups in testing had to be assigned to an almost impossible timeline to get the work done.

The problem was both critical and embarrassing. The consortium's first visible product had been hurriedly developed by outside consultants whose activities and materials had not been monitored or reviewed by any member of the consortium. In their haste to see some results, the necessary checks and balances had not been built into the

process. Everyone apparently assumed that because "experts" had been hired to do the job, there was nothing more for the consortium to do but wait for the printouts of field test results.

Analysis of Possible Causes of the Problem

This is an excellent example of the perspective that pervaded the consortium in its early stages of development. The group had not yet generated the sense of ownership it needed in order to function as the final arbiter of the work it sponsored. Further, it did not have sufficient cohesiveness for its members to be willing to work hard together on task forces rather than relying on external experts who were isolated from the consortium itself. Everyone seemed to feel that obtaining results was simply a function of paying someone to do the work. Cooperation from the districts did not go beyond what was necessary for the actual pilot testing.

Certainly not all of the responsibility for the pilot testing difficulties can be placed on the shoulders of the outside consultants. There were some internal organizational issues that the consortium needed to face and some assumptions that should have been challenged. The April meeting provided an opportunity for evaluating where the consortium was and for planning next steps. The minutes note, "There was an expression on the part of some of the districts that they might not want to continue with a consortium next year, but no district indicated that [it] had made a decision to drop out at this point." It was clear that if the group did not become more organized and effective by the beginning of the 1979-80 school year, some districts would no longer be members.

Retrenchment and Reorganization

Another significant change was initiated at the April meeting. Recently hired, the new Coordinator for Guidance and Testing at the county office was beginning to become more involved in consortium activities. He had assembled the teacher comments on the writing pilot test and was assigned to work with a consortium committee to obtain feedback from districts about test items. In addition, he and a consortium representative had attended a two-week workshop on item development sponsored by the State Department of Education. Both were available to help districts develop assessment materials related to AB 65. This new coordinator was to play a significant role in the success of the consortium, as the case description will point out later.

Some retrenching was going on at the county office as well. Thank-you letters were mailed to those who participated in the pilot testing, providing an opportunity to apologize for the "unrealistically tight timeline." The letters were straightforward, thoughtful, and gracious. One of them ended, "We hope the results will prove to be worth the effort, time, and criticism you received because of our logistics problems." In addition, six "Sip and Crunch" lunch meetings for county office staff were scheduled during March, April, and May 1979. These "brown baggers" were suggested because "a concern has been expressed that the right hand doesn't know what the left is really doing [regarding] AB 65 implementation within and without the Instructional Division." The county office was actively trying to enhance information sharing among its staff and to smooth ruffled feathers outside the agency.

During May and June, consortium task forces working on performance indicators reported their progress and had their recommended changes approved by the group. The Coordinator for Testing and Guidance had written a draft of an AB 65 board policy statement, which was amended by the consortium and distributed to its members. Local board adoptions of competencies and performance indicators were proceeding well.

Because it was agreed that a second pilot test would have to be conducted in the fall, the county office offered to contribute $4,750 in Title IV-B money to pay consultants to work on the proficiency assessment package. Some of the consultants selected were active representatives on the consortium and had already invested a great deal in the work of the group.

Before the summer recess, the consortium voted to continue operations during the 1979-80 school year. It suggested that $500 be again contributed by each member district.

Turning a Negative into a Positive

Perhaps the most significant turning point in the development of the consortium occurred in the summer of '79. During these summer months, the future course of the consortium was charted and made more secure. A number of factors contributed to this evolution:

- The Coordinator for Guidance and Testing moved into the position of consortium coordinator. He initiated a concerted effort to accomplish some tasks so that progress would be evident by the new school year.
- The consultants hired with Title IV-B monies were prolific. All of these individuals were affiliated with school districts in the county, and some served as consortium representatives. They worked hard, developing a large binder of products that were distributed at the August meeting.

- More accurate budget figures were developed by the new consortium coordinator. He was able to determine that the proposed $500 per-district contribution for the upcoming year would fall $4,000 short of the cost of the second round of pilot testing. Rather than move ahead with an insufficient budget, he asked the districts for an additional $200 each. This was the first time the district contribution had been based on a thorough planning and budgeting process.

We see, then, that the county office put an individual into a strong leadership role and provided the money for products to be developed by insiders--not outside experts. The strategy was successful.

The August 1979 meeting was quite different from the ones that preceded it that spring. An array of products were distributed along with reaction sheets for comments from the member districts. The price of $1,250 was set for any new district wanting to join the consortium during the 1979-80 school year. And for those wishing only to purchase the "consortium package," the price was scaled from $1,000 to $2,500, depending on the size of the district. To protect its models and materials, the consortium agreed to copyright its products.

The August meeting marked the end of the initiation or "muddling through" phase of the consortium and the beginning of a more stable period. The group finally had materials that were useful to member districts and valuable to those outside the consortium. The interorganizational arrangement had something to justify its existence and nurture its growth.

Publicity and expansion of materials and services became new concerns for the consortium. The transformation from a faltering, tentative, loosely linked group to a cohesive, product-oriented collection of districts occurred during the six months between April and October 1979. After October, the consortium's activities adopted a different perspective:

- A publicity package was mailed to northern and central California districts to market the sixth-grade items and the Proficiency Assessment Specifications Samples (PASS) Manual developed to go with them. Although the consortium could not officially sell its products for a profit, it could use the money to support further developmental efforts.

- The PASS Manual was sent to the state's Assistant Chief of the Office of Program Evaluation and Research at his request. It was accompanied by the stipulation that the state agency respect the copyright and not disseminate the publication. Further, any sharing of the materials with legislative or political figures was to be done jointly by the assistant chief and a representative of the county office.

- The consortium decided to spend $500 to sponsor the development of a Title IV-C grant proposal to be created jointly with the secondary consortium to support and expand their materials development projects. The proposal was written and submitted but was not funded because it was judged to be not "innovative" enough.

- Additional workshops were provided at the request of the consortium. One inservice session on how to score writing samples was enthusiastically received by the group. Others on topics such as proficiency assessment of special education students and setting standards for passing scores were also conducted.

- Companies providing scoring services gave a presentation at a consortium meeting. Districts began to cooperate extensively on the preparation, printing, and scoring of their sixth-grade field tests. In addition, the districts involved in full-scale proficiency tests shared their item analysis data with the consortium.

- A consultant was hired to do an item review for the sixth-grade pilot test. The purpose of the review was "to identify those items which [were] absolutely unacceptable and eliminate them from the bank."

All of this activity was costing money, however, and the consortium faced a deficit of $1,200 by the end of January 1980. Further developmental work on sixth-grade items was still necessary, at a projected cost of $6,000. To complete the sixth-grade package by June, the consortium voted to assess all members an additional $300 and to issue another work agreement to the districts.

Additional Redefinition and Reorganization

Here the group reached a juncture marked by a number of realizations. A year after the consortium had planned on completing the sixth-grade proficiency test, it was still unfinished. The goals of the consortium required a considerably greater investment of time, effort and money than anyone had realized. Getting the work done was not simply a matter of collecting a small amount of money from each member and paying an outsider to do the job. Each school district was much more involved in the process, requiring inservice workshops on subjects such as standard setting, scoring writing samples, and test administration. Their considerable accomplishments came slowly and after a significant investment.

The consortium members had a number of options. They could reduce their work load, request additional money from districts and other funding sources, begin contributing more of their own time to necessary activities, expand the membership, or enter into a cooperative arrangement with another consortium or agency for mutually beneficial ends. One key factor was in the consortium's favor. The county office's Coordinator for Guidance and Testing had assumed the leadership of the consortium and was managing it in a way that was getting results and motivating the members. As decision points arose, the consortium reorganized.

- It began relying more on task forces composed of its own members to do much of the work. Eventually the consortium established a requirement that every member serve on at least one task force throughout the year. The group, then, began looking more within itself for information and services, rather than relying on outside experts.

- Item development and pilot testing at the sixth-grade level had required a disproportionate amount of time and effort. This original development effort had taken over a year to accomplish. Other tasks, such as formulating competencies and performance indicators for reading, writing, and mathematics, could be accomplished efficiently by the consortium itself; but an alternative to original test item development had to be found before work on the upcoming fourth- and eighth-grade proficiency tests could begin.
- Hiring educators from within the county to serve as consultants had alredy proven to be an effective way of developing products and materials. Perhaps using insiders in the same way they were employed during the summer of '79 would enhance progress even more.

Nurturing and Maintaining the Consortium

1980 brought the advent of a new approach to assigning responsibility for completing consortium priorities. Task forces contributed significantly to the output of the group. Cooperative printing and scoring of assessment instruments was selected as an alternative by some of the districts. Insiders paid by the consortium were exceptionally prolific. And a private testing firm with an extensive item bank helped streamline the item development and field testing process that previously had been so time-consuming. Each of these alternatives will be described briefly as they manifested themselves after January 1980.

Task Forces. A variety of task forces composed of district representatives to the consortium produced a considerable amount of work beginning in 1980. Listed here are some of the functions performed by these committees:

- Developed model tests for the sixth grade in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Recommended whether or not the consortium should purchase item banks from Northwest Evaluation Association; recommended policy assurances to protect copyrighted materials and sixth-grade items already produced by the consortium.

- Reported to the consortium on how current priorities could be accomplished.
- Planned the assessment for grades 4 and 8.
- Developed alternative means of curriculum and management related to the basic skills by collecting samples and building a model.
- Collected and disseminated item data from districts that had conducted the sixth-grade assessment.
- Developed and finalized test designs for grades 4 and 8.
- Negotiated new requests for membership and set membership costs.
- Reviewed the possibility of racial or ethnic test bias and developed procedures for reporting suspect items to the consortium.
- Decided on the conditions under which a university could join the consortium.

This list provides ample evidence that task forces played a significant role in moving the consortium ahead in its activities. But all of this investment of time came not without its share of prodding. At the June 1980 meeting, only eight out of 30 consortium members were present. The minutes state, "Attendance, commitment, and participation of districts at consortium and task force meetings has become a problem." The group felt that every representative should participate in at least one task force. One person suggested that a fine be charged for inactivity on the part of a district representative. The consortium decided at the August 1980 meeting to require every member to serve on one task force throughout the year.

But by October, the problem still was not resolved. Two members "voiced strong feelings of concern about those who were on the task forces but were not participating. The result was that the burden of work fell on the few who were participating when it should be more evenly spread." Discussion resulted in an effective solution.

Task forces began meeting for an hour and a half before each regularly scheduled consortium meeting. Attendance improved, and no more complaints were forthcoming.

Consultants. Two consultants were hired by the consortium during 1980-81. One individual, who had worked at a county school district for a number of years, was hired repeatedly to provide comprehensive service on various tasks for the consortium. He developed and field tested additional sixth-grade items in all three basic skills areas. Afterward, he put the sixth-grade item banks on 5x8 cards and distributed them to consortium members, providing them with a training session on how test instruments could be developed from the cards.

Another individual, who had served as a district representative in the consortium and had worked as a consultant to the group in the summer 1979, was asked in August 1980 to do some additional work. The task force established to develop competencies for the fourth and eighth grades had not met that summer, failing to complete its assigned task. The consultant developed a matrix of competencies and performance indicators for grades 4 and 8 based on the existing sixth-grade and secondary standards.

The first consultant mentioned became involved in the competency and performance indicator work during fall 1980, and continued working on it throughout the school year. He distributed a draft of articulated competencies and performance indicators in grades 4 and 8 for districts to review and critique. Later he agreed to develop a product entitled Articulation of Basic Competencies, Grades 4 - Secondary. Finally, he helped develop the Administrator's Information Manual (AIM), a notebook for administrators involved in implementation of the proficiency

assessment mandate. Assisted by task forces, he was able to provide the comprehensive investment of time necessary to accomplish the assigned tasks.

Purchasing Item Banks. The considerable drain of time and money that the sixth-grade item bank required has already been discussed. Along the way, the consortium learned that item development and validation was not as easy as it might have seemed earlier. So when Northwest Evaluation Association approached the group with an offer to sell its item banks, the consortium gave the option thoughtful consideration. A task force working with the secondary consortium recommended that the consortia purchase the reading and mathematics items for a total of $1,000. The cost would be shared by both consortia. A consultant was hired to develop a procedure to identify the items in the bank that fit the competencies and performance indicators established for grades 4 and 8. In June 1981, the consortium agreed to enter into a reciprocal trade agreement with Northwest. The consortium would have access to the 10,000 items in the Northwest bank, and Northwest would be allowed to add the sixth-grade items developed by the consortium.

Here we see, then, that for a mere $500, with an equal contribution from the secondary consortium, the elementary group was able to obtain reading and mathematics items that fit their specifications for the fourth- through eighth-grade assessments. This was a considerably smaller investment than the sixth-grade item bank had required. Working with an outside company that had already developed test items thus resulted in cost-cutting. Starting from scratch and using internal expertise may be the best way to accomplish some tasks, but item development seemed not to be one of them.

Inservice Training and Workshops. The consortium requested workshops whenever its members felt that they needed additional information about a topic. Some of the inservice training sessions conducted especially for consortium members are listed here:

- The California State Department of Education sponsored a workshop on alternative modes of assessment. The CSDE consultant tailored the sessions around basic skills competencies and performance indicators developed by the elementary consortium.
- The consortium paid a consultant to provide training on holistic/analytic scoring of writing samples for district personnel.
- The Santa Clara County AB 65 Special Education Consortium gave a presentation on how it developed its assessment framework.
- A cassette tape of a presentation given to the secondary consortium and its accompanying paper were made available to each of the member elementary districts. The presentor, a local professor and researcher, had developed an innovative approach to improving the effectiveness of basic skills instruction.

Budgeting. The 1980-81 budget was set at $36,250; $10,000 already existed in carry over from the previous year, and the county office was able to provide $4,500 in returned Title IV-B money. That left a total contribution of $870 for each of the 25 member districts.

At the August 1980 meeting, the group discussed the option of limiting its goals in an effort to reduce the financial contribution each district would have to make. They agreed, however, that priorities should remain as they were and "that the cheapest way to develop the assessment was through the consortium."

The projected budget for 1981-82 totaled $30,500. The county office was able to contribute $6,000 toward these costs. Each member district was asked to contribute $850 but to allocate $1,000 in case the consortium needed additional funds by the end of the year. Four priorities were established for the development of products during 1981-82:

First priority - Develop an item scoring guide for writing samples from the fourth grade through high school with an accompanying teaching strategy and workshops. The secondary consortium would contribute half of the developmental costs of this material.

Second priority - Develop model workshops based on the AIM manual for administering the proficiency assessment program and update the manual as needed. Here again the secondary consortium was willing to contribute half of this expense.

Third priority - Develop items for fifth- and seventh-grade assessment packages, field test the item data, and check for cultural bias.

Fourth priority - Prepare a companion to the AIM manual that links the proficiency assessment program with curricular implications. The secondary consortium would pay half of the developmental costs here as well.

Local Ownership

In a state like California, with its strong norms of local control, the issue of giving up district autonomy in a collaborative effort can influence consortium development. In this case, however, there is little evidence that district autonomy served as a barrier. A number of factors may explain this tendency.

- The county office had already established a precedent for district cooperation through consortia. Many of the districts were better able to weigh the costs and benefits of membership in the AB 65 Elementary Consortium because of their prior experience with such groups.

- The legislation gave districts enough time to develop a proficiency assessment process on their own if they chose to. This leeway afforded them the option of participating in the consortium without being completely vulnerable if it was unproductive or unsuccessful. Even if a district discontinued membership or the consortium was dissolved, there would still be time to meet the mandate.

- The risks were small compared to the potential benefits for a district. At most, it might lose a few thousand dollars and some staff time. In return, it stood to obtain all of the materials and training necessary to meet the mandate, along with complete assessment packages and processes for grades 4-8. It would be quite a bargain if the consortium succeeded.

- Because of district concern about obtaining assessment materials that were reflective of their own standards, philosophies, and curricula, the consortium created flexible, modular products. Performance indicators and item banks for each grade level allowed districts to develop assessment packages that met their unique needs. There was no one test that all of the consortium members agreed to use, just as there was no one set of performance standards.

The County Office Role

Credit should be given to the Office of the Santa Clara Superintendent of Schools, which provided constant, unwavering impetus and leadership for the AB 65 Elementary Consortium. This county office is remarkable in its commitment to consortia as an effective way of helping districts meet mandates and accomplish educational objectives. But this commitment provides more than just lip service in favor of the concept of collaboration. Itemized here are some of the ways the county office supported the consortium throughout its existence:

- Initially, the county office called the meetings for the purpose of exploring the option of an AB 65 elementary consortium. Throughout the life of the consortium, meetings have been held at the county office facility, and office and storage space have been provided to the consortium.

- At least one professional staff member on the county payroll has served as consortium coordinator from the outset. Frequently more than one county office consultant has contributed to consortium projects. The current consortium coordinator has been a particularly effective leader, keeping the group on task, chairing meetings skillfully, distributing comprehensive written communications to member districts, and sensing when changes need to be made or immediate action taken. Certainly the credibility and expertise of the current coordinator have helped the consortium to remain as well-organized and productive as it has been.

- Another positive influence was provided by the secondary consortium. Already functioning when the elementary consortium was proposed, it continued to nurture a supportive, collegial relationship with the elementary consortium. The two consortia shared costs for product development and co-sponsored workshops. The coordinators of both consortia work together frequently at the county office, increasing the possibility of collaboration between the two groups.

- Finally, the significant financial investment that the county office was willing to make contributed a great deal toward product development and the implementation of priorities. Not only were large sums of money made available annually for the consortium budget, but the county office was also willing to support considerable professional staff costs.

Entrepreneurial Activity

When finished products began appearing in summer 1979, the consortium understood that it had something of value to school districts. Since then, a variety of materials and manuals copyrighted by the consortium have been made available for purchase by other districts throughout the state of California. Although the consortium is not legally able to sell its products for a profit, they can justify charging more than printing costs, provided that the additional funds are reinvested in further developmental efforts.

Some of the consortium's products are the results of hundreds of hours of time voluntarily contributed by task force members. Consultants paid by the consortium have also worked on a number of products. The end result is a collection of highly useful materials, thoroughly conceptualized and thoughtfully written. These materials would be invaluable, time-saving additions to the resources of many school districts in California.

The consortium is currently concerning itself with the entrepreneurial questions of copyright, marketing, and promotion. If anything, the members seem to place too little value on the time and expertise they have invested in their extensive developmental effort. Maybe they need more time to discover how worthwhile the results of their work really are.

Was It Worth the Effort?

Perhaps the best way to answer this question is to let the consortium members speak for themselves. Here are comments from the 1979-80 evaluation conducted within the consortium.

> "We are all new to this process. It is important that we share ideas, plans, and materials."
>
> "It's the only way we can afford to get the job done."
>
> "Too many of us are content to let someone else do the work. We've got to assume more responsibility."
>
> "Constantly be alert to and squelch temptation to replicate work already done satisfactorily elsewhere."
>
> "I think the elementary consortium is extremely valuable and I don't want to see it 'reduced' in any way. We all need to reexamine our commitment and then do something to act upon that commitment. Yea team, let's go!"

In Summary

This case study of the Santa Clara County AB 65 Elementary Consortium documents the development of a collaborative effort among a number of school districts and an intermediate service agency. It traces the major events that occurred within this interorganizational arrangement, where the members went for service and information, and how this knowledge was used. The costs and benefits, responsibilities and rewards of consortium activity emerged as the case unfolded. What can be learned from the experience of the AB 65 Elementary Consortium?

- Interorganizational arrangements, like organizations themselves, are constantly evolving. Sometimes this evolution takes the group down detours; other times it provides a direct route to effective cooperation.
- Interorganizational arrangements follow predictable stages of development. Initially they will probably have vague goals, fluid participation of members, and an ambiguous plan for moving ahead. Trial-and-error activity can be expected during the early months, if not longer. This is followed by a more

stable period with clearer objectives and directed activity. Such changes are normal and healthy.

- A sizable investment of time, energy, and money is necessary if an IOA is to remain vital and productive. Formal membership and financial contributions must be strengthened by more informal investments of expertise and creativity on the part of the representatives themselves.

- Collaboratives provide a larger pool of resources to be used for obtaining outside consultants, services, and information. This knowledge and skill benefits all the member organizations, increasing the impact of the investment.

- Staff development activities for representatives of member organizations can enhance the quality of their performance in the consortium. Other means of communicating current information to these individuals are also necessary to avoid confusion, duplication of effort, and unnecessary work.

- A strong organizational and individual leader contributes significantly to the success of a collaborative effort. Having someone who can coordinate a multitude of activities and linkages and who has the support of his or her employer is essential to the success of a consortium.

A-1

APPENDIX

Data Collection Procedures

Data collected for this case study were triangulated by using the following three techniques:

1. Interviews were conducted with county office staff and consortium members. Respondent comments about the consortium's developmental processes and anecdotes about the collaborative involvement of members established the overall framework for the case.

2. Two researchers attended an all-day consortium meeting held at the end of the 1980-81 school year. Their observations of interaction and discussion among consortium members provided further data for the case description.

3. All of the archival documentation of consortium activities and transactions was reviewed. Information from meeting minutes, internal and external correspondence, budgets, evaluations, and reports contributed a considerable amount of data to the case study.

Consortium Membership

Figure 1 summarizes information about the members of the AB 65 Elementary Consortium as of summer 1981. A number of observations can be derived from the data:

- There are 10 districts serving K-8 and 13 serving K-12. In addition, one university and one county office are in the consortium, which has a total of 25 members.
- Of the 23 school districts, 15 are located within Santa Clara County and 8 are outside the county.
- Over one third (9) of the member districts have fewer than 10 schools, and another third (8) have 10-19 schools. Three districts have 20-29 schools, one has 30-39 schools, and two have over 50 schools.
- The above configuration correlates with student population figures, summarized below:

Enrollment	Number of Districts
to 4,999	9
5,000-9,999	8
10,000-14,999	3
15,000-19,999	1
20,000-29,999	0
30,000+	2

- These districts are predominantly medium-sized, suburban or rural, located in the southern part of the San Francisco Bay Area and in the farming communities around San Jose. Members from outside the county are mostly from small communities. Two of the unified districts not in Santa Clara County serve large rural areas and thus have more schools.

Figure 1
Membership
Santa Clara County
AB 65 Elementary Consortium
Summer, 1981

Organization	Location	In Santa Clara County? Yes	In Santa Clara County? No	Number of Schools and Grade Levels	Enrollment	Year Joined the Consortium
Albany Unified	Albany		X	7 K-12	2,155	79
Cambrian Elementary	San Jose	X		6 K-8	2,423	78
Cupertino Union	Cupertino	X		30 K-8	14,252	78
Davis Unified	Davis		X	10 K-12	5,348	80
Evergreen Elementary	San Jose	X		10 K-8	6,392	78
Fairfield-Suisun Unified	Fairfield		X	24 K-12	13,337	81
Franklin-McKinley Elementary	San Jose	X		11 K-8	6,847	79
Gilroy Unified	Gilroy	X		11 K-12	6,774	78
Los Altos Elementary	Los Altos	X		8 K-8	3,094	78
Milpitas Unified	Milpitas	X		15 K-12	8,340	78
Moreland Elementary	San Jose	X		8 K-8	4,423	78
Morgan Hill Unified	Morgan Hill	X		16 K-12	8,471	79
Mt. Diablo Unified	Concord		X	52 K-12	32,632	80
Palo Alto Unified	Palo Alto	X		22 K-12	10,123	78
San Jose Unified	San Jose	X		54 K-12	36,182	79
San Lorenzo Valley Unified	Ben Lomond		X	5 K-12	3,250	80
Santa Clara Unified	Santa Clara	X		24 K-12	16,187	78
Saratoga Union	Saratoga	X		5 K-8	2,714	78
Scotts Valley Union	Scotts Valley		X	3 K-8	1,346	79
Sunnyvale Elementary	Sunnyvale	X		13 K-8	5,804	78
Travis Unified	Travis AFB		X	6 K-12	2,885	79
Vacaville Unified	Vacaville		X	15 K-12	8,655	81
Whisman Elementary	Mountain View	X		4 K-8	1,183	79
Santa Clara County Office	San Jose	X				78
San Francisco State University	San Francisco		X			81

Total Number of Members = 25

Changes in Consortium Membership

Membership in the consortium has not remained static, as indicated by Figure 2. Within the first year of its existence, consortium membership doubled, jumping from 12 in December 1978 to 27 in December 1979. By May 1980, membership was at its peak of 33. Since then the numbers have declined to the current total of 25. Of the members that have dropped out, four joined in 1978, nine joined in 1979, and one joined in 1980.

A correlation seems to exist between the nine districts that joined in 1979 and the membership high of 33 in May 1980. This could be interpreted as a rush to join the consortium after its impressive assortment of products was unveiled in the fall of '79. After these new districts were involved for a year or two, they discontinued membership. This left almost the same nucleus of districts that had participated in the consortium since its inception. Those that chose to collaborate from the beginning seem to have exhibited greater longevity than the ones that initially held back from joining.

Figure 2

Changes in Consortium Membership

Consortium Membership Totals

Date	Number of Members
December 1978	12
February 1979	16
December 1979	27
May 1980	33
August 1980	30
June 1981	25

Previous Participants in the Consortium that Are No Longer Members

Organization	Year Joined
Alum Rock Union Elementary	78
Mt. Pleasant Elementary	78
Mountain View Elementary	78
Orchard Elementary	78
Berryessa Union Elementary	79
Campbell Union Elementary	79
Lakeside Joint Elementary	79
Loma Prieta Joint Union Elementary	79
Los Gatos Union Elementary	79
Luther Burbank Elementary	79
Montebello Elementary	79
Oak Grove Elementary	79
Union Elementary	79
Parlier Unified	80

OUTCOMES OF THE AB 65 ELEMENTARY CONSORTIUM

Products

Administrator's Information Manual: Managing Proficiency Assessment. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, Elementary/Secondary Consortium, 1981.

Articulation of Basic Competencies, Grades 4-Secondary. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, Elementary/Secondary Consortium, 1981.

Evaluating Writing Samples, Grade 6. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, AB 65 Elementary Consortium, 1981.

Item Bank for Mathematics, Reading and Writing, Grade 4. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, AB 65 Elementary Consortium, 1981.

Item Bank for Mathematics, Reading and Writing, Grade 6. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, AB 65 Elementary Consortium, 1980.

Item Bank for Mathematics, Reading and Writing, Grade 8. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, AB 65 Elementary Consortium, 1981.

Model Test Design: Grade 6 Mathematics Basic Skills Test. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, AB 65 Elementary Consortium, 1980.

Proficiency Assessment Specifications Samples: Grade 4. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, AB 65 Elementary Consortium, 1981.

Proficiency Assessment Specifications Samples: Grade 6. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, AB 65 Elementary Consortium, 1979.

Proficiency Assessment Specifications Samples: Grade 8. Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, AB 65 Elementary Consortium, 1981.

Information

June 1978 - Paper transparency masters and pages from the Alameda Process Handbook--mailed.

June 1978 - Competency statements in all three subject areas developed by the consortium--mailed.

June 1978 - Paired-weighting prioritization charts for selecting test items--mailed.

January 1979 - List of companies providing test scoring services--distributed at consortium meeting.

April 1979 - Samples of local board policies and reciprocity agreements developed by LEAs for proficiency assessment--mailed and then discussed at the April meeting.

May 1980 - List of consultants to train district staff in holistic/analytic scoring of writing samples--distributed at meeting.

November 1980 - Samples of management systems developed by LEAs to implement the proficiency assessment--distributed at training.

May 1981 - Copies of a cassette tape of a presentation and a paper by a local researcher on improving the basic skills--discussed at meeting and sent by mail.

Training - Workshops and Conferences

January 1979 - Workshop on applying the Rasch process to analyze item data.

April 1979 - Representatives sent to CSDE-sponsored Training Program for Competency Assessment.

November 1979 - Workshop on holistic/analytic scoring of field test writing samples.

January 1980 - Passing score workshop to help LEAs select proficiency standards for the assessment.

May 1980 - CSDE-sponsored a workshop on alternative modes of assessment, tailored specifically to consortium needs.

May 1980 - Presentation by the coordinator of the AB 65 Special Education Consortium gave a presentation on how the members developed their assessment framework.

Shared Services and Facilities

November 1979 - Cooperative efforts begun among LEAs for preparing, printing, and scoring their assessments.

All consortium meetings were held at the Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools.

Task Forces

Dates in Existence	Name	Purpose
October 1977	Elementary Districts Steering Committee	Recommend initial steps for establishing the consortium
November 1978-March 1979	Reading, Writing, and Math Task Forces	Revise competency statements for each basic skill area; Refine competencies and performance indicators
January 1980	Model Tests in Reading, Writing, and Math	Review and finalize model tests in all three skill areas
January 1980-March 1980	Item Bank Task Force	Review item banks developed by Northwest Evaluation Association and recommend whether or not the consortium should purchase them; Recommend and formalize a process for LEAs to use item banks purchased from Northwest Evaluation Association
April 1980-May 1980	Priorities Task Force	Develop a plan for accomplishing all consortium priorities

The Mandated/Freestanding Arrangement

The study of interorganizational arrangements conducted previously by the Educational Dissemination Studies Program suggested a two-dimensional classification system for collaboratives. One factor in the matrix was the school improvement effort, which could be mandated, enabled, or freestanding. The second dimension was the arrangement itself, which could also be mandated, enabled, or freestanding. Each IOA included in the study was categorized into one of the nine cells in the matrix, depending on the school improvement effort associated with the arangement and the catalyst for the establishment of the collaborative.

The AB 65 Elementary Consortium, which was one of the arrangements included in the earlier study, can be classified as mandated/freestanding. The school improvement effort it addresses is mandated by the AB 65 requirement that elementary schools adopt proficiency standards and tests. But the arrangement itself is freestanding. It was established voluntarily by interested organizations--not mandated or enabled by an outside agency or funding source.

What conclusions can be reached about such mandated/freestanding arrangements? The first one, which is also the most obvious, is that a mandated innovation or educational change can provide a powerful impetus for cooperation among school districts. Member organizations knew that they were required to set proficiency standards, develop assessment instruments, and administer them within a given length of time. Whether they really wanted to invest time and resources in the effort was a moot point; they had no choice but to meet the mandate.

Essentially, there were two options for meeting the mandate open to school districts. They could work alone, assuring that the end product was specifically targeted to their schools' needs. Or they could join forces with others, sharing some of the investment of time and resources needed to fulfill the requirements. The trade-off for this potential cost-cutting might be products and processes not as closely aligned with individual district needs and programs.

The formation of the arrangement itself was neither mandated nor enabled with external funding. Consequently, any collaborative means of meeting the mandate had to be supported with resources contributed by member organizations. There were a number of risks inherent in such an approach.

- First was the risk of entering into a collectivity rather than remaining autonomous. Sometimes cooperative efforts fail miserably, the victims of indirection, disorganization, second-class status, and lack of enthusiasm. Member organizations may forfeit their unitary decision power and organizational control to the consortium as a whole.

- Second, the deadline for compliance with the mandate was fixed. By joining the consortium, districts were risking the time they could otherwise be spending working alone on the proficiency assessment requirements. If the consortium failed and the districts eventually had to function independently, they would have less time to complete tasks than they would have had otherwise.

- Third, the investment of resources and staff time was a risk. Although initially the consortium required low to moderate contributions of money and effort from the districts, membership in the consortium eventually exacted a greater toll. Annual financial contributions nearly doubled, and each representative is now required to serve on at least one task force. The opportunity costs of such involvement--the other ways the money might have been used or the other activities in which the representative would otherwise have been involved--represent another kind of risk.

- Finally, consortium members risked loss of prestige when they decided to join a collaborative effort. There were other districts in the county that chose not to participate. They would be watching the consortium to determine whether or not it succeeded. Decision makers who adopted a stance in favor of collaboration would be judged by their non participating peers--albeit covertly and implicitly. The consortium symbolically represented the value of shared resources and expertise, and that value was at risk when the IOA was formed.

Ultimately the risks paid off. The consortium was far more productive than any of its member organizations had hoped. Strong bonds among the districts were formed as their staffs worked together toward common goals. And the AB65 mandate was met.

Organizing the Consortium

"Consortium" is defined in the dictionary as "a fellowship; partnership." To consort is "to keep company; to associate; to accord; harmonize" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, 1961, p. 178).

The spirit of these definitions is evident in the AB 65 Elementary Consortium. Rather than being a group bound by rigid rules, it is bound by fellowship. A formal agreement among the member organizations establishes their minimum financial and service commitment. But the results of the group effort extend far beyond these minimums. Because of the harmony and good will that have emerged, the consortium has provided more than just compliance with California's proficiency assessment mandate.

On the following pages, an organizational document of the consortium is reprinted. It opens with its own operational definition of a consortium: "a structure for providing a representative process for districts to cooperatively accomplish tasks based on a common and critical need." A Work Agreement is included, along with a page listing principles for success, start-up, and the consortium process. A flow chart then depicts this process in greater detail.

Some highlights from these materials bear noting:

- The county office contributes the organizational leadership for the consortium, providing a fiscal agent, a coordinator, and consultant assistance.
- Products for the year are specified in the Work Agreement, as are the districts' monetary and professional contributions.
- Sharing and cooperating are emphasized, as evidenced by the numerous task forces and the prerogative the members have to make all major decisions.

- The consortium receives input from three groups via the district representatives: a professional (faculty) advisory committee; a community advisory committee; and administrators from each district.

- The work of the consortium is performed by task forces, the coordinator, and consultants.

- Ultimately, the board of education in each member district has the option of accepting, rejecting, modifying, or individualizing consortium products.

On the next five pages are copies of organizational materials used for consortium start-up.

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THE MAKINGS OF A CONSORTIUM

by

Dale Burklund, Ed.D
John Patterson, Ph.D

Definition: Webster - Consort; one who shares a common lot

Consortium; an association, society

Operational - A consortium is a structure for providing a representative process for districts to cooperatively accomplish tasks based on a common and critical need.

An Equal Opportunity Employer

AB 65 ELEMENTARY CONSORTIUM

AGREEMENT

This is an agreement between the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools (Superintendent) and Participating School Districts (identified in Paragraph 2), in the Santa Clara County AB 65 Elementary Consortium relating to the coordination of the implementation of the AB 65 "Pupil Progress."

1. Duties of Superintendent. Superintendent shall: perform the duties of Fiscal Agent for the Santa Clara County AB 65 Elementary Consortium, coordinate the efforts of the participating districts in the development of and refining of the model assessment procedures and assessment package. Provide consultant assistance in developing assessment materials and validating assessment procedures.

   Products that will be provided:

   A. Refined competency statements that are developed by participating school districts in the areas of reading, math and writing.

   B. Refined performance indicators (objectives) for each competency statement.

   C. Refined test items for each performance indicator.

   D. Item data - P values and biserials - for each item.

   E. A model Administrator's Manual for administration of the test developed from the model assessment package.

   F. Model board policy statements for adopting competencies and standards.

   G. A model scoring procedure for writing samples.

   H. Model formats for communicating, reporting and recording test results.

   I. An item bank coded according to competency and performance indicator to provide efficiency for developing tests and alternative forms.

2. Obligation of District. _____ School District shall pay to Superintendent a sum not to exceed Five Hundred Dollars ($500.00) on or before October 1, 1979.

3. Term. This agreement shall commence on July 1, 1979, and terminate on June 30, 1980.

4. Coordinating Committee. Each Participating District shall designate one individual to be a member of a coordinating committee. The coordinating committee shall have the following duties:

A. Decide what activities shall be undertaken by the Participating Districts;

B. Decide what materials shall be purchased by the Participating Districts;

C. Decide what shall be printed or reproduced by the Participating Districts;

D. Decide when and how consultant services shall be provided; and

E. Shall be responsible for development and administration of budget.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have executed this agreement on _____, 1979.

_____ SCHOOL DISTRICT

By _____

SANTA CLARA COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

By _____
Chief Deputy Superintendent

JP:cs

6/15/79

Principles for Success:

1. The Consortium must be founded on a common and critical need that can be met more effectively and efficiently through districts sharing and cooperating.

2. Consortium members make all major decisions.

3. All member districts contribute money to achieve Consortium goals.

4. All member districts contribute personnel to achieve Consortium goals.

5. Consortium membership establishes the budget and decides on allocation of financial resources.

6. A work agreement (not a contract) specifies the task to be accomplished and the related district and coordination responsibilities for completing the task. Doesn't tie the hands of the district administration and board...

Start Up:

1. Identify a common concern and validate it by checking with districts.

2. Call a meeting of district representatives in regard to the common concern.

3. Determine the extent to which the need is common, critical and appropriate for district cooperation.

4. Make decision to organize Consortium.

5. Organize goals and desired outcomes into a consortium work agreement that specifies district and coordination responsibilities.

6. Carry out charge of the Consortium.

Consortium Process:

1. Action decision of Consortium.

2. Development by Task Force, coordinator and/or consultant.

3. Review by Consortium.

4. Finalize development.

5. Disseminate to Consortium

NOTE: See flow chart for more detail on consortium process.

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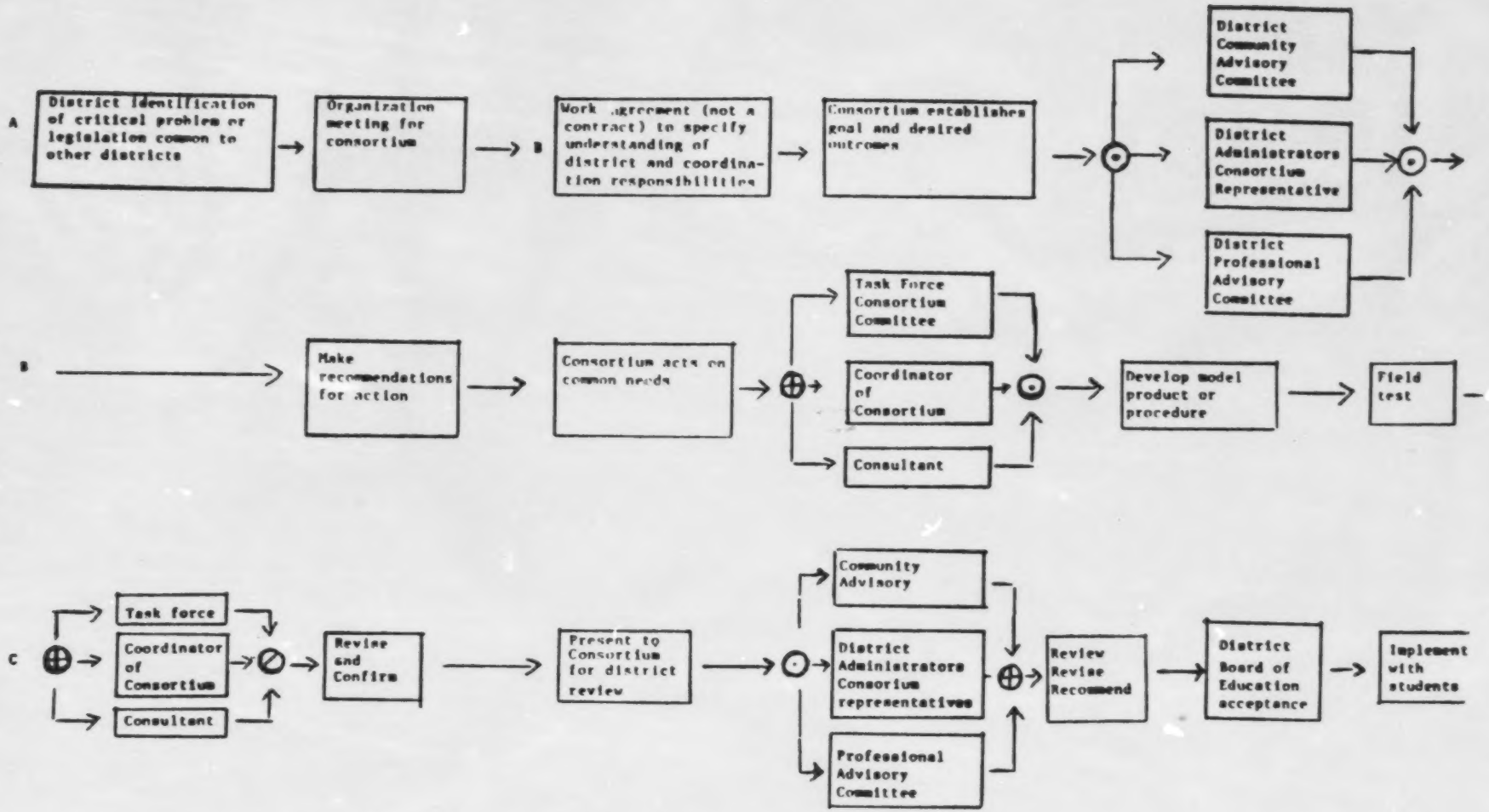
Note: Secondary Consortium has 14 member districts
Elementary Consortium has 26 member districts



Key: ⊖ = and

⊕ = and/or

∅ = either

BEST COPY AVAILABLE